

### REMARKS

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Initially, Applicant traverses the restriction requirement set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

In the Office Action, the Examiner sets forth a restriction requirement between two groups of claims. Group I, claims 1-10, is directed to a lens assembly for a semiconductor exposure device, and is classified in class 355, subclass 30. Group II, claims 11-17, is directed to a remote maintenance management system for a semiconductor process device, and is classified in class 700, subclass 108.

The Examiner contends that the inventions of Groups I and II are patentably distinct, because they are related as subcombinations disclosed as usable together, and because the fields of search are not coextensive such that separate examination would be required. These contentions are respectfully traversed.

Applicant notes that the inventions of Groups I and II are so closely related in the field of exposure that a proper search of any of the claims would, of necessity, require a search of the others. Thus, it is submitted that all of the claims can be searched simultaneously, and that a duplicative search, with possibly inconsistent results, may occur if the restriction requirement is maintained.

Applicant submits that any nominal burden placed upon the Examiner to search an additional subclass or two, necessary to determine the art relevant to Applicant's overall invention is significantly outweighed by the public interest in not having to obtain and study several separate patents in order to have available all of the issued patent claims covering

Applicant's invention. The alternative is to proceed with the filing of multiple applications, each consisting of generally the same disclosure, and each being subjected to essentially the same search, perhaps by different Examiners on different occasions. This places an unnecessary burden on both the Patent and Trademark Office and on Applicant.

In the interest of economy, for the Office, for the public at large and for Applicant, Applicant requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the restriction requirement. Nevertheless, in order to comply with the requirements of 37 C.F.R. § 1.143, Applicant confirms the provisional election, with traverse, to prosecute the invention of Group I, namely claims 1-10.

To expedite prosecution, claims 18-28 are now presented in lieu of claims 1-10, which have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 18 is the independent claim in this grouping. Support for claims 18-28 can be found in the original application, as filed. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Claims 11-17, withdrawn from consideration, as being directed to a non-elected invention, have been retained in this application in order to preserve Applicant's rights. Applicant requests that the Examiner contact his undersigned representative should it be necessary to cancel these claims in order to advance the subject application to issue.

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the object and rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

The Examiner objected to the specification on formal grounds. Applicant has amended the specification by correcting minor informalities, including those noted by the Examiner, in order to place the application in better form. The Examiner will note, however, that no change was made at page 15, line 22 of the specification, because Applicant was uncertain as to what correction needed to be made. No new matter has been added by the foregoing changes.

Turning now to the art rejections, claims 1, 5, 9 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by the published U.S. Patent Application US 2002/0145711 to Magome, et al. Claims 2-4 and 6-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over the Magome, et al. publication in view of published U.S. Patent Application US 2003/0020888 to Tanaka, et al. Applicant submits that the cited art, whether taken individually or in combination, does not teach many features of the present invention, as previously recited in claims 1-10. Therefore, these rejections are respectfully traversed. Nevertheless, Applicant submits that claims 18-28, as presented, amplify the distinctions between the present invention and the cited art.

Independent claim 18 recites an exposure apparatus that includes a first space filled with a helium gas and a second space filled with a nitrogen gas. A pressure of the first space is higher than that of the second space.

Applicant submits that the cited art does not teach or suggest such features of the present invention, as recited in independent claim 18.

The Magome, et al. publication discloses an exposure apparatus that supplies a clean, dry air into an apparatus, nitrogen gas into reticle and wafer spaces and helium gas into a lens barrel of a projection optical system. A pressure of the nitrogen gas, however, is higher than that of the clean, dry air, in order to prevent the air from flowing into a nitrogen purge space.

The Tanaka, et al. document teaches producing a pressure difference between two lens barrels of a projection optical system.

Applicant submits, however, that neither citation teaches or suggests producing a pressure difference between a helium gas and a nitrogen gas, by setting a pressure of a first space

to be higher than that of a second space, in the manner of the present invention recited in independent claim 18.


For the reasons noted above, Applicant submits that the present invention, as recited in independent claim 18, is patentably defined over the cited art, whether that art is taken individually or in combination.

Dependent claims 19-28 also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in independent claim 18. Further individual consideration of these dependent claims is requested.

Applicant submits that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the objection and rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early notice of allowance are requested.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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